

Vaccines and Preventable Diseases

Polio Vaccination: What Everyone Should Know

Updated August 11, 2022: In July 2022, CDC was notified of a case of polio in an unvaccinated individual from Rockland County, New York, and is consulting with the New York State Department of Health on their investigation. Public health experts are working to understand how and where the individual was infected and to provide protective measures, such as vaccination services to the community to prevent the spread of polio to under- and unvaccinated individuals. This does not change CDC recommendations for polio vaccination. CDC urges everyone who is not fully vaccinated to complete the polio vaccination series as soon as possible. Small updates were made on this page to clarify vaccination recommendations for adults and some other specific populations.

At a Glance

CDC recommends that children get polio vaccine to protect against polio, or poliomyelitis, as part of the series of routine childhood vaccines. Inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) is the only polio vaccine that has been given in the United States since 2000. IPV is given by shot in the leg or arm, depending on the patient's age. Oral polio vaccine (OPV) is used in other countries.

CDC recommends that **children get four doses of polio vaccine**. They should get one dose at each of the following ages: 2 months old, 4 months old, 6 through 18 months old, and 4 through 6 years old.

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Most adults in the United States were vaccinated as children and are therefore likely to be protected from getting polio.

Adults who completed their polio vaccination but who are at increased risk of coming in contact with poliovirus (see below) may receive one lifetime IPV booster. Some adults might not have received all recommended doses of either OPV or IPV and therefore might not be sufficiently protected against polio. Adults who are incompletely vaccinated should get or complete their polio vaccination with IPV.

Who Should Get Polio Vaccine?

Infants and Children

As part of routine childhood immunization, children in the United States should get inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) to protect against polio, or poliomyelitis. They should get four doses total, with one dose at each of the following ages:

- 2 months old
- 4 months old
- 6 through 18 months old
- 4 through 6 years old

Children who have not started their polio vaccine series or who are delayed in getting all recommended doses should start as soon as possible or finish their series by following the recommended catch-up schedule.

For more information, see [Vaccine Schedules for Parents | CDC](#).

People who plan to travel internationally should make sure they and their children are fully vaccinated against polio before departure. For more information see [Polio: For Travelers | CDC](#).

Adults

Most adults have likely already been vaccinated against poliovirus during childhood, and that is why IPV is not part of [routine adult vaccinations](#).

However, adults who are unvaccinated, incompletely vaccinated, or are completely vaccinated but are at higher risk for contact with poliovirus should receive polio vaccination. The following situations put adults at higher risk:

- You are traveling to a country where the risk of getting polio is greater. Ask your healthcare provider if you need to be vaccinated.
- You are working in a laboratory or healthcare setting and handling specimens that might contain polioviruses.
- You are a healthcare worker treating patients who could have polio or have close contact with a person who could be infected with poliovirus.

Adults who have never been vaccinated against polio should get three doses of IPV:

- The first dose at any time
- The second dose 1 to 2 months later
- The third dose 6 to 12 months after the second

Adults who have had one or two doses of polio vaccine in the past should get the remaining one or two doses.

Adults who are at increased risk of contact with poliovirus and who have previously completed the polio vaccination series (IPV or OPV) can receive one lifetime booster dose of IPV.

Who Should Not Get Polio Vaccine?

Tell the person who is giving the vaccine:

- **If the person getting the vaccine has any severe, life-threatening allergies.**
If the person receiving the vaccine ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of IPV, or has a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, they may be advised not to get vaccinated. Ask your health care provider if you want information about vaccine components.
- **If the person getting the vaccine is not feeling well.**
If the person getting the vaccine has a mild illness, such as a cold, they can probably get the vaccine today. If they are moderately or severely ill, they should probably wait until they recover. Your doctor can advise you.

What Are the Types of Polio Vaccine?

Two types of vaccines protect against polio, or poliomyelitis.

- **Inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV)**
 - IPV is the only polio vaccine that has been used in the United States since 2000.
 - It is given by shot in the leg or arm, depending on the patient's age.

For more information about IPV, see [Vaccine Composition, Dosage, and Administration](#).

- **Oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV)**
 - This vaccine is no longer licensed or available in the United States.
 - It is still used in many parts of the world.
 - Children receive doses of the vaccine by drops in the mouth.

For more information, see [About Oral Polio Vaccine \(OPV\)](#) .

Since 2000, only IPV has been used in the United States to eliminate the risk of [vaccine-derived poliovirus](#) that can occur with OPV.

How Well Does the Polio Vaccine Work?

Inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) is the only polio vaccine that has been given in the United States since 2000. IPV protects against severe disease caused by poliovirus in almost everyone (99 out of 100) who has received all the recommended doses. Two doses of IPV provide at least 90% protection, and three doses provide at least 99% protection.

What Are the Possible Side Effects of Polio Vaccine?

With any medicine, including vaccines, there is a chance of side effects. These are usually mild and go away on their own, but serious reactions are also possible.

Some people get a sore spot where the shot was given. IPV has not been known to cause serious problems, and most people do not have any problems with it.

Some problems that could happen after getting this vaccine:

- People sometimes faint after a medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting and injuries caused by a fall. Tell your healthcare provider if you feel dizzy or have vision changes or ringing in the ears after you get the shot.
- Some people get more severe and lasting shoulder pain than the typical soreness that can follow injections. This happens very rarely.
- Any medication can cause a severe allergic reaction. Such reactions from a vaccine are very rare, estimated at about one in a million doses, and would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death.

The safety of vaccines is always being monitored. For more information, visit CDC's [Vaccine Safety](#) site.

For printable information and translation to other languages, see [Polio Vaccine Information Statement \(VIS\)](#).

What Are the Childcare and School Polio Vaccine Requirements?

All 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC) have state laws that require children entering childcare or public schools to have certain vaccinations. There is no federal law that requires this.

CDC recommends that all children get four doses of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), with the fourth dose at 4 to 6 years of age, before or at school entry.

For more information, see [State Vaccination Requirements](#).


How Can People Pay for Polio Vaccine?

Most health insurance plans cover the cost of vaccines. However, you may want to check with your insurance provider before going to the doctor.


If you don't have health insurance, or if your insurance does not cover vaccines for your child, the [Vaccines for Children Program \(VFC\)](#) may be able to help. This program helps families of eligible children who might not otherwise have access to vaccines. [To find out if your child is eligible](#), visit the [VFC website](#) or ask your child's doctor. You can also contact your [state VFC coordinator](#).

Adults can also see [Finding](#) and [Paying for Vaccines](#) or [Find a Travel Medicine Clinic](#).

Educational Materials

- [Polio Vaccine Information Statement](#)
 - [In English](#)
 - [Other languages](#) 
- [CDC Polio Website](#)
- [Polio Elimination in the United States](#)
- [Polio Vaccine Information for Parents](#)
 - [Vaccine \(Shot\) for Polio](#)
 - [La vacuna \(inyectable\) contra la poliomielitis](#)
- [Polio: For Travelers](#)
- [Global Polio Eradication](#)
- [Vaccine Schedules for Parents | CDC](#)
- [Recommended Vaccines for Adults | CDC](#)

Resources for Healthcare Providers

- [Polio Vaccination: For Healthcare Providers | CDC](#)
- [Child Immunization Schedule](#)
- [2021 Catch-up Guidance for Children 4 months through 17 years of age-Inactivated Polio Vaccine \(IPV\) \(cdc.gov\)](#) 
- [Poliomyelitis – Chapter 4 – 2020 Yellow Book | Travelers’ Health | CDC](#)

Related Pages

[Polio Vaccine Information Statement](#)

[Childhood Immunization Schedule](#)

[Adult Immunization Schedule](#)